



Student Feedback on Gender Fair Classrooms

Grades: 9-12
Time: 1-2 Class Periods
Subjects: All subjects and classes

Description:

This activity examines the interpersonal dynamics of a classroom, focusing on gender fair classroom management (instructor/student) and peer (student/student) interactions. Students complete the enclosed survey, and the results are plotted on the board or overhead. Each survey statement is discussed by the class as a group. A class contract, or code of conduct, will address issues raised by the survey.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

Short Term

- Analyze classroom management methods and styles.
- Analyze peer actions and expectations in a classroom setting.
- Express opinions clearly and fairly.
- Develop open-mindedness and tolerance for differing viewpoints.
- Apply new concepts of equitable behavior to a written contract.

Long Term

- Establish a dialogue of student/instructor issues
- Understand group dynamics and interactions.
- Develop a voice within the classroom setting.

Materials:

1. "Student Feedback Survey" (attached).
2. Chalkboard and/or overhead.

Procedure:

Day One:

1. Hand out survey to each student. Students should be made aware that the survey is confidential and anonymous, and they may share information only if they feel comfortable doing so.
2. As a class, discuss each statement. Ask students to cite "examples" of behaviors/feelings stated in those survey questions that may need clarification.
3. Have students individually complete surveys and hand into instructor.
4. Instructor tallies survey results for following day and prepares an overhead transparency with the results.

Day Two:

1. Survey results are plotted on the board or overhead. Survey results are shown to students.
2. As a class, discuss each statement on the survey and the students' responses. Try to focus on the impact of learned behavior regarding gender dynamics, that teachers, as human beings, are susceptible to gender biases, and that teachers express these biases in subtle and overt management methods and styles. Also, note that students play a role in this dynamic for the same reasons.
3. As a class, develop a series of statements that address and attempt to rectify gender-related issues and inequities raised by discussion. These statements should be generated by both students and teacher, written down on the board or overhead, and voted on. Consensus of opinion is highly desirable, rather than "majority rules."

Some sample statements might be:

- "Everyone should have a chance to speak, every day."
 - "Speakers should not be interrupted."
 - "Call on girls as much as boys."
4. Statements accepted by the class are written down, signed by all class members, and displayed in a prominent space in the classroom.
 5. Each student receives an individual copy of the above statement in contract form.
 6. If desired, strategies for dealing with contract infractions may be established by the class. This is tricky, as students tend to get rather Draconian in meting out justice. Perhaps create a student/teacher council to review infractions and recommend remediation. Perhaps create student mediator body to help resolve conflicts. In any case, attempt to keep a positive spirit and a sense of open dialogue in the class about these issues.

Evaluation:

In a very real sense, the instructor is being assessed in this activity. It is probably inappropriate to grade students on any aspect of this project, unless it's to give all students an "A" or a Check Plus.

Related Activities:

1. Students set up a peer counseling/mediation group.
2. In history classes, research may be done on contract negotiations, democratic principles, etc.

Student Feedback Survey

Please read the following questions and circle the most appropriate answer. Do not put your name on the paper unless you want to. Please answer honestly; there are no penalties for negative responses.

1. The instructor lets me finish speaking when I answer a question in class.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

2. The instructor calls on females as much as males.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

3. In this class, males get in trouble more often than females do.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

4. In this class, males get harsher punishments than females.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

5. The instructor talks to every student in class, every day.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

6. In this class, males get asked harder questions than females get asked.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

7. Females are allowed to talk to each other more than males are.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

8. In this class, males are allowed to shout out answers.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

9. The instructor uses sexist language in class.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

10. The instructor uses stereotypes when talking about women or gays.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

11. The instructor is open to new ideas.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

Student Feedback Survey (continued)

12. Sexist language and behavior between students is tolerated by the instructor.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

13. Students exhibit sexist behavior behind the instructor's back.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

14. I feel that I can't say what I think in this class.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

15. I feel safe in this class.

ALMOST ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

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